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Soviet Naval Personnel: Qualities and Capabilities

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Summary

We believe the Soviet Navy's personnel system, despite its many weaknesses, is adequate for meeting the requirements of the type of naval war the Soviets expect to fight. The Soviets are aware of the limitations of their naval personnel and have taken them into account in developing equipment, tactics, and operating procedures.

The Soviets do not expect most of their naval units to be able to conduct operations as complex and demanding as do the United States and other Western navies. Their objectives are more limited, with the bulk of their fleet intended to fight a brief, defensive conflict, conducted in waters relatively close to Soviet shore support facilities. Operations in distant waters would be confined primarily to opportunity strikes against carrier battle groups and other nuclear strike platforms, with little regard for sustained combat across the world's oceans. In this light, personnel deficiencies that would be serious in Western navies, can be viewed as less so by the Soviets.

The Soviet Navy has a number of personnel deficiencies which we believe will reduce the effectiveness of their fleet. Such weaknesses, however, probably will not prevent them from achieving their goals in a short war primarily fought in waters contiguous to the USSR. Should the war assume a different character, however, we believe their Navy would find it difficult to adjust. Soviet naval personnel are not prepared to carry out a wide variety of missions under different circumstances, and probably would have difficulty adapting their operating patterns to an unexpected environment. We believe, therefore, that personnel limitations will inhibit the Soviet Navy's ability to effectively conduct prolonged or distant operations, and will cause their naval units to have difficulty reacting to unexpected and rapidly unfolding enemy actions.

We do not expect to see major changes in the Soviet naval personnel system in the near future. Demographic changes in the USSR, coupled with the demand for quality personnel brought about by the continued introduction of ever more sophisticated naval equipment, will put pressure on the system. We believe, however, that the Soviets will successfully deal with this problem by tightening up restrictions on educational deferments, and possibly increasing the quality of preinduction training of Soviet youths.

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Introduction

Analysis of the fighting capabilities of the Soviet Navy usually emphasizes the quantity or quality of its equipment. A thorough assessment of the Soviet Navy, however, requires close scrutiny of its personnel system. Many of the technological gains it has made over the last few decades are offset somewhat by problems related to the use of short-term conscripts in a high-technology environment, and by certain cultural characteristics associated with the Soviet state.

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This study evaluates the Soviet Navy's personnel system in relation to its ability to achieve its wartime objectives. It will assess how the Soviets select, train, use, and motivate their sailors. The judgments expressed in this study are necessarily subjective because of the nature of the problems and the evidence on which they are based.

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Manpower

Service Obligation

All Soviet males 18 to 26 years old are liable for service in the armed forces. Most conscripts serve two-year terms, while sea-going naval personnel must serve for three. Permanent deferments are possible for medical problems and family hardships, but these are rarely granted. The Soviets have curtailed the availability and advantages of educational deferments over the last decade.

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Demographic Trends

The Soviet military faces a demographic dilemma in the 1980s. In 1985, the number of draft-age males is expected to decline to 2.1 million—a 20-percent drop from its 1978 peak of 2.7 million. This level is not expected to be reached again in this century. Moreover, the proportion of non-Slavic minorities among 18-year-olds will rise steadily from 25 percent in 1970 to nearly 40 percent by 1990.

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Compared with the Slavic peoples, the non-Slavs are generally less educated, have difficulty with the Russian language, and come from rural cultural backgrounds that make them less useful to a technologically oriented service like the Navy. In addition, it is likely that the military leadership considers non-Slavic conscripts to be politically less reliable.

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The Navy so far has not been as seriously affected by demographic changes as other services—in part because its manpower requirement is only about 6 percent of the USSR's total annual conscription and because the Navy may have priority over most other services in the conscript selection process. The Soviet naval officer corps is almost exclusively Slavic and its fighting units are predominantly so. Nonetheless, the Navy is not immune from the problems of changing demographic character of the USSR. The Soviet press has described problems of sailors who cannot speak Russian serving aboard major surface combatants. Competition with other segments of Soviet society for Slavic males could induce minor changes in the Navy's personnel system as demographic trends continue. [redacted] 25X1

Preinduction Training

Soviet youths are exposed to a variety of military training programs prior to service in the armed forces. These programs are intended to improve the military utility of new recruits by familiarizing youths with military life, fostering an interest in hobbies and activities with military applications, and encouraging martial attitudes and patriotism. The quality of preinduction training varies widely, but is generally poor. While some future sailors may learn specialized military skills well enough to enable them to skip part of basic training, the majority will not. [redacted] 25X1

As a technologically oriented service, the Navy has a strong incentive to push for improving the quality of preinduction training as a means of coping with the demand for trained technical specialists. We have little evidence of significant improvements being made to the DOSAAF program; however, Fleet Admiral Yegorov in 1981 was named to head DOSAAF with the mission of improving technical training for young people. US attaches have described Yegorov as an officer with a reputation for high competence, which possibly indicates increased Navy support for preinduction training. [redacted] 25X1

Conscript Training and Use

About 75 percent of Soviet naval personnel are short-term conscripts. When they first come to the Navy, they are mostly young, unskilled, and unmotivated. The great majority are not happy about being drafted and eagerly anticipate being discharged. [redacted] 25X1

The Soviet Navy's answer to the problem of training these men is narrow specialization. Whenever possible, naval equipment is designed to be easy to operate and maintain. Emphasis on component replacement, rather than repair, reduces the requirements on conscripts' abilities, and junior officers and warrant officers, rather than conscripts, do "hands-on" technical work. The classroom technical instruction program for enlisted personnel is short, and on-the-job training is emphasized. [redacted] 25X1

Selection

Local draft boards called Voyenkomats maintain dossiers on all draft-age males which are used to place recruits. Twice a year, representatives of the different services known as military buyers review local draft boards' dossiers to decide which service and service branch each draftee is to be assigned to. The Navy may have a high priority among the services in the selection process because its work generally requires more educated, technically oriented personnel. [redacted] 25X1

Specialty Assignment and Training

After a 4 to 6 week boot camp, recruits will have been assigned their naval specialty—the job that they will most likely hold for the rest of their service term. The assignment of naval specialties appears to be conducted in a haphazard manner. The sheer number of people who must be processed in the annual draft and the Russian bureaucracy's inefficiency make it unlikely that the Soviets will overcome this problem. [redacted] 25X1

Most Navy recruits are sent to a five-month basic specialist course after boot camp. Here, recruits are supposed to be familiarized with the equipment they will be using in their units and receive instruction in basic theory and skills related to their particular job. The level of instruction is simple, being roughly equivalent to high school vocational education classes in the United States. Theoretical instruction can address topics such as basic principles of electricity, radar, engines, or submarine structure. Depending on his specialty, a new sailor may also be taught a skill such as schematic diagram reading, circuit tracing, knot tying, soldering, or morse code. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] the quality of specialist training varies widely. Quite often, training centers do not have equipment for recruits to practice on, nor do they have classroom models or mockups. When tests are given, they are sometimes so simple that everyone passes. Other emigres, however, give a different picture of specialist training. They describe competent instructors who make good use of slides, films, equipment mockups, and models. Classroom instruction is sometimes supplemented by training on simulators for specialties like radar and sonar operators. Although the quality of Soviet naval specialist training is uneven, we believe that, for the most part, it is adequate given the limited roles expected of conscripts in the Soviet Navy. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Unit Training

The most important part of conscript training is conducted on the job by the operational units. The Soviets use a structured, Navy-wide system tied to the semiannual conscription cycle and geared toward rapid assimilation of new personnel. As one group of draftees completes their

Soviet Navy Enlisted Ranks

Senior Warrant Officer
Warrant Officer
Ship's Chief Petty Officer
Chief Petty Officer
Petty Officer 1st
Petty Officer 2nd
Senior Seaman
Seaman

Comparing Soviet Navy enlisted ranks to corresponding US Navy ranks can be misleading. Soviet petty officers and warrant officers have considerably less training, responsibility, and status than most noncommissioned personnel in the US Navy. Senior US enlisted personnel perform duties that, in the Soviet Navy, are more often performed by officer specialists.

[redacted] 25X1

service obligation, the Navy has a new crop of recruits ready to fill their jobs a few months before. This is done so the newcomers can receive their orientation from the outgoing sailors they are to replace. One emigre reported that conscripts could not leave the Navy until their successor passed his proficiency exam—a powerful incentive for dedicated teaching. However, testing standards are sometimes relaxed in the interest of expediency. [redacted] 25X1

At any given time, a Soviet ship will have a number of novices among its crew as a result of the regular influx of new draftees. These men can contribute little to the running of their ships, and Soviet military writings have indicated that, in some cases, they may even be a hindrance to smooth operations. The novice sailors require a considerable amount of time from experienced officers and warrant officers for training and supervision. [redacted] 25X1

Enlisted personnel in the Soviet Navy are awarded one of four specialists grades which are supposed to signify their proficiency in their particular job. To advance a grade, conscripts are supposed to pass an examination by a committee of officers, though [redacted] lax testing procedures. While new sailors are supposed to be qualified after a couple of months on the job, emigres report that it often takes about a year before they feel confident performing their duties. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Unit training is required of a ship's crew before it can be certified as combat ready. The operational unit training program is driven by socialist competitions. At the beginning of every training period, each sailor makes pledges detailing the level of expertise he will attempt to achieve in the coming year. These pledges become the criteria against which his performance is judged. Results are used to evaluate individuals and to identify training deficiencies, but primarily the competition is a management tool to motivate sailors and stimulate improved performance. [redacted] 25X1

Peer pressure is the key to making the socialist competition work. The names of leaders as well as laggards are publicized in an effort to appeal to the Russian sense of sacrifice for the group. Such competitions are probably effective motivators in the better combat units which have higher morale. Statements by the Chief of the Navy's Main Political Directorate and frequent press criticisms, however, furnish evidence that competitions are often characterized by "formalism" with units only going through the motions of competition and achieving quantitative goals at the expense of quality work. [redacted] 25X1

Increasing the number of conscripts with dual specialties is often one of a ship's socialist competition goals. Soviet naval writings pay much lipservice to the benefits of having sailors learn additional specialties and bestow praise on ships with a high percentage of cross-trained sailors. Exemplary ships are commonly cited as having a third of their crew cross-trained in another specialty. [redacted] 25X1

Despite such official encouragement, [redacted] with rare exceptions, enlisted sailors are not at all interested in learning how to perform additional duties. Moreover, Soviet naval officers are hard pressed to find time to teach new sailors a single specialty in light of the high conscript turnover rate. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Warrant Officers

Naval enlisted careers traditionally have been held in low esteem in the USSR, and retention of career servicemen remains a serious problem for the Navy. Career petty officers and warrant officers make up only about 8 percent of the Navy's personnel total. Despite longer enlistment requirements, most career enlisted probably opt for service as warrant officers in order to receive higher pay. [redacted] 25X1

The primary role of the warrant officer in the Soviet Navy is to provide continuity and experience. Warrant officers usually serve in the same specialty—often on the same ship—for as long as they remain in the Navy. They are used to train newly arrived junior officers, and assist all officers in maintaining equipment and training conscripts. They also have

some responsibility for maintaining discipline at the subunit level, though [redacted] press articles indicate that most warrant officers are poor leaders. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Although Soviet press articles claim that only the best of sailors may be chosen to become warrant officers, [redacted] virtually anyone willing to sign the five-year commitment is accepted. Prior to boot camp, new draftees are offered the opportunity to go directly to warrant officer school, though almost all reject the offer. Most conscripts who have completed their term of service and reenlist are automatically promoted to warrant officers. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Training

Before they are sent to the fleets, warrant officers usually receive their training in special school programs lasting from six months to two years. Those with previous naval experience (as conscripts or petty officers) sometimes are allowed to skip this training. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] the quality of training at warrant officer schools is poor. [redacted] 25X1 25X1 admissions standards are for appearances only and that, in fact, almost anyone is admitted to the schools because of the Navy's recruitment difficulties. [redacted] military press articles furnish evidence that teaching staffs at warrant officer schools are apparently inferior, and the schools lack adequate facilities, instruction materials, and training equipment. Ship commanders have been criticized for using warrant officer cadets assigned to their ships on orientation cruises on cleanup details which teach them little about shipboard equipment and operations. [redacted] 25X1

Status

[redacted] 25X1 25X1

warrant officers are looked down upon by officers and men alike. They are viewed as individuals who could not make it in the civilian world, and who were not good enough to earn commissions. [redacted] 25X1

Career Prospects

Career opportunities for warrant officers in the Soviet Navy are dismal. They are strongly discouraged from transferring to another unit or even changing ship departments. Although young warrant officers can become officers if they display talent and have the academic skills to pass the Higher Naval School entrance exams, such advancement appears uncommon. Even if they can pass the exams, unit commanders are reluctant to lose a good warrant officer and so tend to discourage such

attempts. Thus most are locked into their rank and billet with little chance of promotion or transfer. Low compensation also has been a problem. Despite regular raises, warrant officer pay has not kept pace with wages in comparable civilian-sector jobs. 25X1

When low status and limited career prospects are added to the usual hardships and family strains associated with Navy life, it is not surprising that few choose to reenlist. The actual reenlistment figures for the Soviet Navy are not known, though observations of 25X1
the rank structure of Soviet crews indicate that it is extremely low. Some Western analysts estimate that retention is as low as 1 percent. 25X1

Value to the Navy

Despite all their faults, the Soviet Navy depends on warrant officers to provide experience, continuity, and skilled assistance. The Navy reasons that even less talented people are bound to acquire useful knowledge and skills if they remain in the same, relatively simple job for their entire career. 25X1

We believe that the Soviet naval personnel system has squandered a potentially valuable human resource by permitting such a discouraging environment for its career enlisted to exist. In fairness it should be noted that the Soviets have partially addressed the problem by using officers to perform functions that would be done by petty officers and warrant officers in Western navies. However, there will always be men who are attracted to a naval career but who lack the inclination toward academic studies necessary to enter the Navy via the Higher Naval Schools or ROTC. Under the Soviet system, many of these potential sailors will be lost to the Navy because there are no attractive enlisted career prospects for them outside of the officer ranks. 25X1

Women in the Navy

There appears to be only a small number of women in the Navy and those few almost always serve in the enlisted ranks, where they hold jobs such as typists, telephone operators, supply clerks, and cooks. The Soviets in the future may be forced to change the way women are treated in the Navy. If greater career opportunities were made available to them, the Navy might attract more educated women from Slavic backgrounds who might help ease the problems resulting from demographic changes in the USSR. Even if they were not employed in combat billets, using more women in responsible roles could free men now holding support jobs for service in fighting units. 25X1

Officer Careers

The backbone of the Soviet Navy is its professional officer corps. An elite group, naval officers are predominantly drawn from the urban, upper strata of Soviet society. Most are volunteers who have been carefully selected for their academic talents, psychological traits, family backgrounds, and demonstrated loyalty to the state. Almost all are career men who enter the Navy with the intention of serving at least 25 years. Officers make up about 19 percent of the Navy's total personnel. [redacted] 25X1

There are substantial differences between Soviet and Western views on the role of naval officers. In contrast to the US practice of viewing them as managers who delegate equipment maintenance and repair to enlisted technicians, Soviet officers serve both as unit managers and as technical specialists who conduct much of the "hands-on" equipment maintenance and operations. In light of the general inadequacies of Soviet conscripts, an officer is expected to be able to perform virtually all of his enlisted subordinates' duties, including routine maintenance. [redacted] 25X1

Leadership in the Soviet officer system is reserved for a select few who receive special preparation and training. This is accomplished through the use of a two-track career system: a command track for ship captains and various squadron and fleet commanders, and a specialist track for technicians and staff specialists. Commanding officers are chosen from those junior officers who exhibit both technical know-how and leadership skills in their first assignment. These men are then groomed for command through broad (by Soviet standards) career assignments and higher schooling. The rest of the officer corps is expected to develop an even greater depth of knowledge of their specialty and serve the fleet as career specialists and staff officers. [redacted] 25X1

The real authority and leadership in the Soviet Navy is concentrated in the hands of the senior command career track officers. These men generally are well trained and experienced. They usually are closely dedicated to the Soviet system which rewards them with high prestige and material benefits. They have more self-confidence than other officers because of their higher social class and special chosen status; hence, the Navy depends on them for leadership and direction. [redacted] 25X1

Officer specialists and junior officers make up the administrative level of the Soviet Navy. They are valued more for their technical expertise than their leadership skills, though they also conduct lower level management of enlisted sailors in addition to assisting commanders as staff officers and special technical troubleshooters. Many of these men perform functions which would be performed by petty officers or warrant officers in Western navies. [redacted] 25X1

Higher Naval Schools

The vast majority of Soviet naval officers earn their commissions by graduating from one of the higher naval schools. These schools are the Soviet Navy's equivalent of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis. Except for the higher naval political school, each has a five-year program that awards the equivalent of a bachelor of science degree (the political school has a four-year program leading to a B.A.). There are 11 higher naval schools scattered throughout the USSR. Five are general officer schools that graduate officers for all branches of the Navy. The remaining six are specialized. 25X1

25X1 admissions to the higher naval schools are highly competitive and that there is no shortage of applicants. Applicants must meet demanding political and academic requirements and pass a psychological test that is used to assess such factors as emotional stability, motivation, and reasoning ability. 25X1 25X1 the entire admissions process can be bypassed for the sons of high-ranking naval officers and party officials. 25X1

Quality of Instruction. 25X1 faculty instructors at the higher naval schools as being generally well versed in their disciplines. The curriculum is slanted toward quantitative and scientific studies, and is much more specialized than the academic exposure a US officer receives. Students specialize in one of a number of areas such as navigation, gunnery, or communications. Practical training at sea (or field exercises for shore specialists) is conducted during the summer between regular terms. 25X1

The Higher Naval School Product. The higher naval schools graduate narrow specialists, not generalists. On the whole, they appear to be good engineers with a sound background in math, science, naval engineering, and the theoretical aspects of their particular specialties. 25X1 25X1

The primary deficiency in new Soviet naval officers is a lack of adequate leadership and managerial skills, according to 25X1 Soviet press articles. Junior officers apparently often have trouble dealing with conscripts, setting priorities, and organizing their time. Western concepts of management theory do not seem to have found their way into the Soviet Navy, and the primary source of leadership and management knowledge for naval school cadets may be the limited experience gained on cadet training cruises. This probably reflects the Soviet belief that

command training is more appropriate later in an officer's career, and then only for those who have demonstrated leadership qualities and are destined for command assignments. 25X1

First Assignment

Upon graduation, a newly commissioned officer is usually assigned to a billet that corresponds to his school specialty (navigation, gunnery, engineering, and so forth). Typically, he will stay in one department on the same ship for the next three to six years where he should progress through positions equivalent to assistant division officer, division officer, assistant department head, and department head. During this period, the newcomer is expected to become well versed in the operations of his department with some assistance from more experienced officers and warrant officers. 25X1

Command Officer Selection

While junior officers perform their duties and work on mastering their given specialties, their potential for future command is evaluated by the ship's commander. In making this assessment, Soviet writings indicate that a ship's captain will consider factors such as the junior officer's leadership qualities and success in managing conscripts, how effectively he identifies priority tasks, organizes his time, and performs under pressure, his status among fellow officers, his standing in the socialist competitions, how well he follows orders and conforms to established procedures, and his technical expertise. A spotless political record is mandatory to be considered for command. Family connections may also influence promotion prospects 25X1

At the end of the evaluation and selection process, the junior officers are categorized into two groups—those who will remain specialists throughout their careers and those who will be trained as line commanders. Each career track has its own career development program. 25X1

Officer Ranks, Positions, and Career Tracks

Rank and position are totally separate in the Soviet Navy. Rank is almost entirely dependent on time-in-grade. Position, on the other hand, is based on an individual's leadership qualities, technical background, and general experience and education. As a result, it is not unusual to find a young, relatively junior officer in a command position with older, more senior officers serving under him in various career specialist billets. The trend since the 1960s has been toward increasingly youthful commanders at the helm of Soviet ships. Soviet naval officers are often given significant command assignments at an early age and then stay in these positions to develop experience. 25X1

The Soviets recognize that inexperienced officers are more likely to make errors in judgment. Fleet Admiral Smirnov has stated that flag officers have a special responsibility to watch over newly appointed commanders. This may partially account for the Soviet tendency to supersede ship commanders' authority during special situations (such as sea rescue operations, foreign port calls, exercises, and so forth) with embarked squadron commanders, staff specialists, or through rigid control from ashore headquarters. 25X1

This tendency to snatch away a commander's responsibilities as soon as any out-of-the-ordinary events arise can be viewed as part of the general pattern of referring important decisions upward that characterizes the command structure. This approach probably inhibits the development of a young commander's self-confidence and instills in him a sense of dependency on higher authority for direction in demanding situations. 25X1

We cannot be certain just how the usurpation of a ship captain's authority by embarked squadron commanders or staff specialists will affect Soviet wartime operations at sea. While few Western captains would tolerate handing over the control of their ships in this way, it appears that the practice is generally accepted in the Soviet military and the implied lack of trust in the commanding officer's abilities does not necessarily result in a loss of face for the junior man. On the other hand, should squadron staff specialists be permitted to countermand the commanding officer's orders, the crew may begin to wonder who is in control, and the resultant loss of leadership could lead to chaos in a critical situation. 25X1

The Soviet proclivity toward rigid shore control of ship operations is potentially a serious problem for the Navy. Tactical decisions often are dictated by ashore headquarters staffs, tying the hands of on-the-scene commanders. This reduces the ability of Soviet naval units to react to unexpected enemy actions and rapidly unfolding situations. 25X1

There are, however, a number of advantages to the Soviet approach of training ship commanders. Because their commanding officers stay on the same ship for four to 10 years, most know their vessels well. Moreover, they are in the command position long enough to establish a meaningful track record with which their superiors can evaluate them, thus making it easier to identify both the star performers and the incompetents. Because the Navy is willing to place young officers in command billets, it is easier to encourage the talented and energetic, and reward them with challenging assignments. 25X1

A Soviet captain normally selects his own executive officer (the second in command) and other assistant commanders from among the ship's officers. An executive officer then has the opportunity to prepare for his own command through an on-the-job training program that familiarizes him with all ship departments, making him something of a generalist by Soviet standards. He must also qualify as a watch officer and perform well at sea. Once qualified, the executive will likely succeed his old commanding officer as the ship's captain. Thus the optimal career path for a junior officer is from department head, to executive officer, and then commanding officer. 25X1

The on-the-job familiarization training for young officers being groomed for command is not without criticism in Soviet military writings. It appears that many Soviet commanders are reluctant to let their junior officers take over ship operations because they do not want to have to deal with possible problems resulting from inexperience. Admiral Gorshkov has commented that commanding officers have a tendency to want to do everything—other men are present on the bridge as onlookers.

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Those officers who fail to be selected as commanders can sometimes transfer to another similar class ship as a department head, but more often they become career specialists. A specialist officer might remain a department head for three to four years, attend a specialist course ashore, and then return to his old unit as a staff specialist. Unlike the US Navy, failure to serve in command billets does not limit an officer's promotion prospects. A career specialist can continue to advance in rank up to, and including, flag rank. 25X1

Staff officers give much needed experience to the fleet, often assisting ship crews to prepare for sea deployment, accompanying them on extended cruises and exercises, and serving on inspection teams. Soviet military writings have expressed some concern, however, that staff officers sometimes perform work that should be done by the regular crews, and that the latter become "witnesses rather than participants in the events," thereby failing to gain needed experience. Moreover, the Soviets have written that, in wartime, such patronage would be impossible as there are not enough staff officers for all of the Navy's ships. 25X1

There is marked tendency for Soviet naval officers to be assigned to the same ship for long periods (up to 10 years in some cases). Soviet officers are not encouraged to cross-specialize because the Navy believes modern naval technology to be too complex to permit them to effectively master more than one specialty. The primary advantage of this policy is that only a limited number of officers on any Soviet ship are likely to be in the initial stages of learning their duties and familiarizing

themselves with equipment. On the other hand, Soviet officers' narrow specialization and lack of broad-ranged fleet experience will make it difficult for them to fill in for one another should circumstances make a given officer unavailable for duty. 25X1

Sea Training

The Soviet Navy seems to prefer to conserve its equipment during peacetime, emphasizing being ready to go to sea rather than being at sea. Soviet officers spend most of their time aboard ship in port, anchorages, or on short cruises of a day or two. Exercise training in the Soviet Navy is characterized by short, simple, stereotyped, and carefully planned drills with little or no "free play" among participants. 25X1

Ship repairs at sea by Soviet crews are very basic, and often involve only the replacement of defective components. For most repairs, the Soviets prefer to have their ships return to port where work can be conducted by specialists. Peacetime naval operations probably are not seriously affected by this policy, since the Soviet Navy is generally content to leave the bulk of its fleet in port, and limit most ship cruises to waters close to the USSR. 25X1

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The Soviet approach is probably a reflection of both their belief that a war at sea will be brief and destructive, with little opportunity for repairs by crews, and a recognition of the limitations of the conscript sailors that make up most of the Navy's personnel. 25X1

Political Infrastructure

Purpose

The political infrastructure of the Soviet Navy is one of its distinctive features. Its primary purpose is to monitor personnel and ensure that the Navy remains completely subservient to the CPSU, though it also has responsibility for boosting unit morale, increasing productivity, and preventing discipline problems. 25X1

The Communist Party's grip on the Navy is maintained through both direct and indirect methods. Indirect control is achieved because virtually all career naval officers and many career enlisted men belong to the CPSU. Although many join simply to further their careers, they are nonetheless subject to party discipline which exerts a powerful control over their actions. Every officer knows that, if he should run afoul of the party and be expelled, his naval career is over and his life and that of his family will likely be ruined. The CPSU is also represented 25X1

directly through the institution of the "zampolit" or political officer, who serves as a combination of secret police officer and unit chaplain. After the commanding officer, he is the most influential man aboard a Soviet vessel. [redacted] 25X1

Political meetings are an integral part of Soviet Navy life both ashore and at sea. Attendance at political meetings is mandatory for all personnel regardless of rank or party affiliation. The captive audiences at these meetings are subjected to regular doses of Marxist-Leninist dogma and various pronouncements by the regime's leadership are read, discussed, and agreed with. New directives from naval authorities and socialists' competition goals are also addressed. [redacted] 25X1

Effectiveness

We believe that, despite some glaring failures, the Soviets have been generally effective in maintaining a tight party grip on the Navy and in guarding against subversive activities by real or potential dissidents. The political structure is far less effective as a motivational tool to make Soviet sailors work harder or risk their lives in battle. [redacted] 25X1

Political training is often viewed as a panacea by the naval leadership. For many cases of discipline, morale, or unit performance problems, the prescription from fleet authorities is "more political training" rather than working on correcting the root causes, almost as if they believe difficulties will go away if only the sailors can be made to understand the importance of sacrificing themselves for Marxism-Leninism. Political training also takes time away from more practical naval activities—a trade-off which the Soviets appear willing to accept. We do not know precisely how much of the Navy's training time is devoted to political instruction, though in some units it is quite high. [redacted] 25X1

Morale and Discipline

Living Conditions

Life in the Soviet Navy is hard. Sailors generally put in long hours with little time off. The largest and most important fleets of the Soviet Navy—the Northern and Pacific—locate most of their base facilities in desolate areas with harsh climatic conditions. The morale difficulties resulting from

remote areas and other service conditions are made worse by an apparent unwillingness on the part of the Soviet leadership to devote resources to easing living conditions. Career personnel fare better than conscripts in this regard, though they too suffer from the effects of remote area assignments, particularly as it affects their family lives. 25X1

Recreational facilities at most naval bases are practically nonexistent, so sailors depend on trips to the nearest town for relief from the boredom of navy life. Attempts by political officers to arrange for entertainment on base are apparently hampered by the lack of available resources. A Soviet admiral writing about the use of films for entertainment, for example, listed the following titles of films that were to be shown to various ships and garrisons:

- "The Communist Party as the Organizer and Inspirer of the Great October Socialist Revolution"
- "Lenin, the Founder of the Soviet State"
- "The Friendship of the Peoples of the Socialist Community"
- "We Are Building Communism." 25X1

Harsh living conditions and the monotony of isolated outposts take their toll on the family life of married sailors. press articles indicate that wives are often reluctant to accompany their navy husbands to remote assignments, and that problems such as divorce, separation, and suicides are linked to service conditions in these areas. 25X1 25X1

Leave and liberty are rarely granted for most conscripts, and the general Soviet approach seems to be to keep them confined to base or ship where their activities can be more easily monitored and controlled. Most conscripts get one 10-day leave period during their term of service. Liberty policies vary greatly from unit to unit. 25X1

Career sailors receive 30-days' leave a year (45 if they serve on nuclear submarines) and usually have evenings free in home port. 25X1

Conditions at Sea

Living conditions at sea tend to be spartan as Soviet ship designs generally do not emphasize habitability factors. Conditions are cramped by Western standards, and amenities such as air conditioning are not found on many Soviet vessels. 25X1

Liberty in foreign ports is rarely granted for Soviet ship crews on distant deployments. Foreign port visits by Soviet sailors are rather tame by Western standards, and often consist of organized sightseeing or museum visits—probably not what the average 19-year-old considers relief from prolonged sea duty. 25X1

Despite the spartan conditions faced by Soviet sailors at sea, 25X1 evidence indicates that many Soviet sailors prefer sea duty to shore assignments. There are a number of explanations for this. Soviet cruises are usually short, and, in some cases, conditions ashore may not be much better than conditions on ship. 25X1 food at sea is much better than ashore and is available in ample quantities. Ideological indoctrination is kept to a minimum on cruises. In addition, sailors receive sea-duty bonuses of extra pay or special credit certificates for purchasing scarce foreign goods in special import stores in the USSR. 25X1

In wartime, spartan living conditions probably would have little effect on combat effectiveness. Russians have historically shown an ability to accommodate hardships in war, and even Soviet civilians accept peacetime living conditions that would appear harsh by Western standards. 25X1

In peacetime, however, substandard living conditions sap morale, erode enthusiasm, and contribute to alcoholism, AWOL cases, and other discipline problems. The loss of peacetime training opportunities because of poorly motivated sailors will indirectly affect the Soviet Navy's wartime readiness, but in ways that cannot be quantified. Certainly it accounts for some of the substandard operational performance noted in this study. 25X1

Discipline

The Soviet naval leadership places little trust in its sailors. Discipline practices discourage sailors from engaging in any activities which are not closely monitored and controlled. Soviet military writings have stated that "a high level of military discipline can be achieved *only* when commanders and officers constantly supervise the behavior of subordinates" while maintaining a "strict regimentation of behavior" and exact observance of naval regulations. To this end, discipline is maintained through a variety of redundant and overlapping informal, administrative, legal, and political controls. 25X1

Despite the multiple controls on Soviet sailors and the strict regimentation of their activities, the Soviet Navy is beset by discipline problems. Conscripts often seem motivated to work mostly out of fear of punishment, with little self-motivation. As soon as their supervision is gone, work stops. Thefts, assaults, drinking on duty, and AWOL cases also are recurring problems. 25X1

These problems are exacerbated by a system which encourages commanders to cover up discipline infractions and unit performance problems. Soviet military writings state that, according to Navy policy, "The very fact that a breach of discipline occurs on board a ship is evidence of deficiencies in either the organization of the shipboard routine or the education and indoctrination of sailors or both." Reporting problems indicates to naval authorities that things are not well and can cost a commander promotions, academy appointments, and other career advancements. One military press article provided a good example of this when it described the case of an idealistic young lieutenant who decided to "report the true state of affairs" in his unit. The ship's commanding officer admonished him by asking, "And do you think they'll thank you for a report like that?" Although press articles indicate that naval authorities are concerned about coverups, they appear unable to correct the problem. 25X1

Discipline Problems

The Navy suffers from the same type of problems that trouble Soviet society in general—alcoholism, corruption, poor work habits, and absenteeism. Military discipline and close regimentation of sailors' activities allow these problems to be controlled somewhat, but the pressures of Navy life also aggravate matters, so that naval authorities often have trouble keeping discontent from seriously affecting readiness. 25X1

Alcoholism. Heavy drinking has been a part of Russian culture for centuries. 25X1 Soviet studies link alcohol to 80 to 85 percent of all crimes committed in the USSR. Alcohol is also linked to many of the Navy's discipline problems. 25X1

strict unit policies toward alcohol abuse. 25X1 sailors could be given six months in a disciplinary battalion 25X1 if an officer even suspected alcohol was being used on duty. Typically, sailors who return to their units from liberty intoxicated are given a 10- to 15-day brig term—a punishment not taken lightly—and those who commit crimes can have an extra five days tacked on to their sentence if they were drinking at the time the offense was committed. 25X1

Despite the remote locations and tough discipline that many units are subject to, naval authorities find it difficult to control the Navy's alcohol problems. Soviet sailors are strongly motivated to find a way around regulations. 25X1
since remote base locations and restrictive leave policies make it difficult to meet women, about the only remaining recreation for Soviet sailors is drinking. In many units, alcohol is the principal medium of exchange. 25X1

The Soviet Navy makes widespread use of alcohol for equipment maintenance purposes, but very 25X1
little of it ever finds its way to the equipment. 25X1

In general, officers are less likely to abuse alcohol on duty than either warrant officers or conscripts. warrant officers are 25X1
most likely to have severe alcohol problems. This is probably a result of their having significantly more spending money and personal freedom than conscripts, while also lacking the professionalism and concern over career prospects that help check alcohol abuse among officers. 25X1

Drug Abuse. Drug abuse does not appear to be a significant problem in the Soviet Navy because drugs are not as readily available as alcohol, and because most sailors come from cultural backgrounds in which alcohol use is more acceptable than drugs. 25X1

Theft and Corruption. Startling instances of graft and personal use of state property are able to go "unnoticed" in the Soviet system according to evidence from Soviet press articles A good example of 25X1
this problem appeared in a 1983 *Krasnaya Zvezda* article regarding the case of a submarine commander who used his crew to work in civilian industry. He was finally caught when a political officer noticed he had purchased three new cars in two years, prompting an investigation. Such practices are common in Soviet society and so it is unlikely the Navy will be able to eliminate it. 25X1

Frustrated by low pay, sailors sometimes sell state property on the black market in order to raise money to buy vodka, 25X1
Vehicle parts and clothing are the items most commonly sold. Such occurrences of petty crime probably do not have a serious impact on readiness, though they are a nuisance to officials. 25X1

Desertion and AWOL. Despite the spartan living conditions found in much of the Navy, desertion does not appear to be a serious problem, [redacted] There are several reasons for this. 25X1
Strict controls on personal travel in the USSR make it easy for authorities to track down deserters. Punishment for those caught is severe—usually a sentence to a disciplinary battalion. Moreover, for many bases in remote areas there is simply nowhere for a deserter to go. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

Unauthorized or overextended liberty is a common problem in home ports [redacted] Boredom provides a strong incentive for 25X1
sailors to go AWOL, and [redacted] it is an offense which 25X1
typically carries a light punishment (such as extra duties). In some units, officers apparently make little effort to stop sailors from sneaking off base at night, while throughout the Navy, warrant officers are usually susceptible to bribes for passes. In foreign ports, however, discipline is strict and sailors are not allowed off ship without an official escort. [redacted] 25X1

The Ethnic Factor

Ethnic conflict among sailors does not appear to be a serious problem for the Soviet Navy. Occasional outbreaks of violence between Slavic and Central Asians do occur, though it is principally confined to construction units. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

Nevertheless, naval authorities are distrustful of non-Slavic ethnic groups, and most sensitive or critical Navy billets are reserved for personnel of Slavic origin. [redacted] service in the 25X1
submarine fleet, for example, is officially restricted to Slavic personnel.
[redacted] 25X1

We do not believe that the Soviet Navy's refusal to integrate or co-opt non-Slavic ethnic groups into positions of responsibility will have a significant effect on its combat readiness. We do believe, however, that such policies will make it more difficult for the Navy to respond to recruiting problems associated with the changing demographic composition of the USSR. It also costs them the services of technologically proficient Western minorities—Germans, Jews, and Baltic peoples—from key positions in combat units. [redacted] 25X1

Naval Reserve Personnel

The Soviet Navy draws its reserve personnel from discharged conscripts, career sailors, and ROTC graduates. As a result of infrequent and poor quality peacetime training, most Soviet naval reserve personnel would likely be of little value to the Navy for combat operations. Reserve forces appear to be regarded by the naval leadership more as a peacetime emergency work force than as a wartime combat reserve. This policy of neglecting the reserves may reflect a Soviet view that a conventional war with the West will be brief, so there is little point in diverting resources from regular Navy programs to prepare for the replacement of wartime casualties. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] callups for naval reserve training or 25X1
temporary duty occur irregularly and infrequently. One reservist, for example, served only one month of active duty in 18 years. Moreover, the quality of naval reserve training is poor. Training at sea is rare (one officer received his first shipboard duty 19 years after receiving his reserve commission) and reservists tend to be ignored by regulars who do not take them seriously and do not have the time to supervise their activities. Reservists often receive no military training during callups, but instead perform manual labor for the Navy. The Soviet press has made references to the use of reservists to work on "urgent construction for the nation," and [redacted] construction tradesmen are 25X1
the personnel most often recalled. In wartime, the poor training received by Soviet naval reservists would likely limit their utility to construction and rear area support. As a result, the Soviet Navy could find itself unable to quickly replace personnel losses in key billets that are essential to submarine, ASW, and surface attack forces. [redacted] 25X1

Merchant marine personnel—many of whom have served in the regular Navy or received ROTC training—could provide some naval experience in wartime. They would probably be of most value in billets related to their civilian work, such as surface navigation or nonnuclear engineering, but would require retraining to effectively perform many combat tasks. [redacted] 25X1

Conclusions/ Implications

Conclusions

We believe the Soviet Navy's personnel system, despite its many weaknesses, is adequate for meeting the requirements of the type of war the Soviets expect to fight. Their naval leadership is aware of the limitations and characteristics of their personnel and have taken them into account in developing strategy and tactics. [redacted] 25X1

The Soviets do not expect most of their naval units to be able to conduct operations as complex and demanding as those expected of the US and other Western navies. Their objectives are more limited, with the bulk of their fleet intended to fight a brief, defensive conflict, conducted in restricted waters close to Soviet shore support facilities. Operations in distant waters primarily would be confined to opportunity strikes against carrier battle groups and other nuclear strike platforms, with little regard for sustained combat across the world's oceans. In this light, personnel deficiencies that would be serious in Western navies, can be viewed as less so by the Soviets. 25X1

Should a war with the West assume a different character, however, we believe the Soviet Navy would find it difficult to adjust. Their naval personnel are not prepared to carry out a wide variety of missions under different circumstances, as are most Western navies, and probably would have difficulty adapting their operating patterns to an unexpected environment without long-term retraining. We believe personnel limitations would greatly inhibit their ability to effectively conduct prolonged or distant operations. 25X1

Implications

If the Soviet Navy is forced to fight a war at sea in a manner for which they are not prepared, the resultant strain on their personnel system will reduce their fleet's effectiveness—potentially negating many of the technological and quantitative gains made in recent years. Western planners may be able to exploit Soviet naval personnel vulnerabilities by tailoring operations to take advantage of the following weaknesses:

Low Sustainability. A lack of emphasis on training in underway equipment repair, safety, and damage control, coupled with a near total reliance on overworked officers to operate ships, means Soviet naval units will have less endurance than their Western counterparts. Thus, the longer they remain at sea, the less effective they will be. If the Soviets can be forced to conduct prolonged sea deployments, they will be more likely to suffer casualties from maintenance problems and make mistakes because of fatigued officers or poor judgment by relief personnel not up to their assigned tasks. 25X1

Slow Reaction Capability. As a result of a lack of realistic peacetime training, reliance on tight control of ships by higher authorities, and a general lack of initiative by tactical commanders, Soviet naval units will likely encounter greater difficulty in reacting quickly to enemy actions than would Western forces in comparable situations. If opponents can keep combat operations fast moving, emphasizing unpredictable and

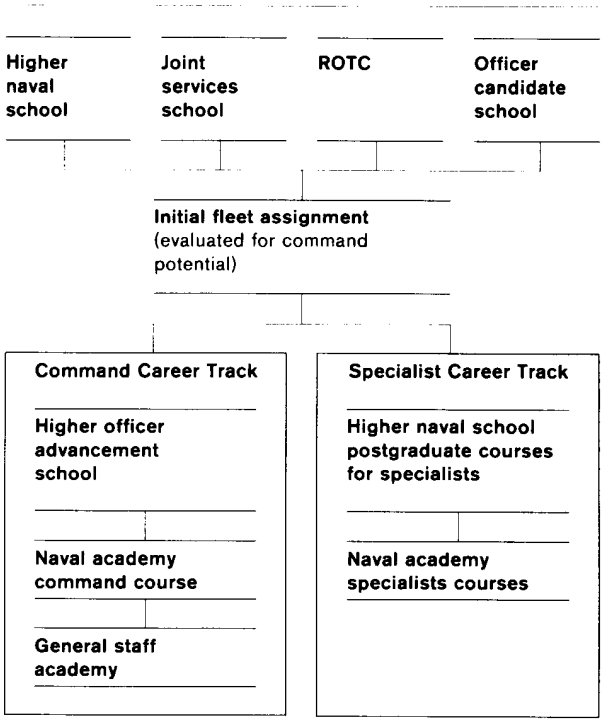
unexpected actions and disruptions of Soviet command communications, Soviet commanders will be forced to deviate from their plans and make rapid, on-the-spot tactical decisions—a behavior that their system does not accommodate well. [redacted] 25X1

Predictable Operating Patterns. The Soviet naval personnel system strongly encourages commanders to conduct operations "by the book" with no room for individual "flair" or variations. By studying Soviet methods, Western planners may be able to identify behavior patterns which can serve as a tipoff to Soviet intentions in battle. Soviet rigidity and intolerance of deviation from established norms make them more susceptible to such operations analysis than Western forces. [redacted] 25X1

Prospects

We do not expect to see major changes in the Soviet naval personnel system in the near future. Demographic reductions in the number of Slavic males, coupled with the demand for quality personnel brought about by the continued introduction of ever more sophisticated naval equipment, will put some pressure on the system. We believe, however, that the Soviets will successfully deal with this problem by tightening up restrictions on educational deferments, and possibly by increasing the quality of preinduction training of Soviet youths. Basically, the Soviet Navy will continue to do what it always has done: run a conscript navy by rote exercise training, highly centralized decisionmaking, and the widespread use of officers for most sophisticated tasks. Battle plans will probably be structured to use this type of force to its best advantage. [redacted] 25X1

Soviet Naval Officer Education Options



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